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SUSTAINING CREATION: EXPLORING THE INTERPLAY BETWEEN RELIGIOUS BELIEFS AND ENVIRONMENTAL CONSERVATION

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I. ABSTRACT

The participants' religious convictions, their readings of holy scriptures, and their perceptions of humanity's duty to the natural world are all covered in the interviews. The surveys gather information on environmental attitudes, behaviours, and how religious beliefs affect environmental awareness. Understanding the impact of religious beliefs in forming attitudes and behaviours towards the environment is essential given the increasing concern about environmental deterioration and the pressing need for sustainable practises. By evaluating the beliefs, values, and practises of diverse religious groups, this research seeks to uncover the connection between religious worldviews and environmental preservation.

This study attempts to provide a thorough understanding of the relationship between religion and environmental preservation by looking at a variety of religious traditions, including but not limited to Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, and indigenous spiritualities. It tries to find similarities and differences between religious groups' views on sustainability and the environment.

Policymakers, religious leaders, and environmental organisations may benefit from the research's findings when deciding how to include religious groups in environmental conservation activities. It is anticipated that the results of this research will further knowledge of the ways in which religious convictions might encourage environmental stewardship. It will clarify how religious teachings may be used to encourage eco-friendly behaviours, environmental protection efforts, and conservation efforts. It

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attempts to foster meaningful communication and cooperation between religious groups and environmental activists by bridging the gap between environmentalism and religion.

II. KEYWORDS

Religion; Environment; Sustainability; Environmental Stewardship; Religious groups.

III. INTRODUCTION

There is a widespread consensus across world faiths that the natural world is a divine creation and ought to be honored as such. Additionally, there is something beneficial that each faith may contribute to the cause of protecting and conserving the natural world. Every worldview has its own interpretation of what caused the cosmos to come into existence. In order to comprehend the connection that exists between people and their natural surroundings, it is necessary for us to comprehend the spiritual facets that are involved in the combination of ecology and society. The study of the impact that religion plays in a variety of environmental challenges has become an extremely multidisciplinary area in recent years. Every religion has the potential to contribute a number of different precepts towards the formation of a moral code for protecting the environment and promoting sustainable practices.

Already, there are several religious traditions that exhibit the same characteristics via their canons. While the spiritual leaders of the many faiths may make commitments, promote awareness, and share the pleasures of making these commitments as well as the obstacles they confront, followers of those religions can also make commitments and express their own joys and struggles. They are therefore in a position to invite others to become their role models and ask them to join them. This demonstrates how religious commitments to the preservation of the natural world are being realized.

IV. HINDUISM'S SACRED CONNECTION WITH NATURE

India is a diverse nation which is home to individuals who practise a wide range of faiths, with Hinduism being the largest religious group. It is a fundamental tenet of Hinduism

that no one should have authority over another and that all living things share the same existence. This religion encourages its adherents to have a respectful and peaceful connection with the natural world around them.

Hinduism's most revered writings, such as the Vedas, Puranas, and Upanishads, as well as the Bhagavad Gita and other works, include allusions to the relationship between nature and the supreme being, including discussions of rivers, mountains, trees, animals, and other natural features. Hinduism encourages sustainable development and environmental protection[2]. Karma and rebirth are two concepts that are significant to the Hindu religion. Rebirth is a concept in which a person might return to life as an animal or bird. Because Hindus believe that numerous deities and goddesses from their mythology are connected to various aspects of nature, including rivers, mountains, trees, and even birds and animals, they pay homage to and revere these aspects of the natural world. According to this faith, showing contempt towards others or taking advantage of them is deemed sinful and wrong. Some of the allusions that are made in the holy scriptures include the following: -like the five fundamental components of the cosmos, which are water, earth, air, fire, and space, which are stated in the Rig Veda and stipulate that they are to be preserved by a man. -like the five basic elements of the universe, which are water, earth, air, fire, and space. In a same fashion, the Narsingh Purana gives godlike characteristics to trees. This religion holds the belief that a man who does not have a connection to nature is analogous to an entity that does not have a soul, despite the fact that the Manu smriti makes reference to the optimal utilisation of natural resources as a means of preserving the ecological balance.

V. BUDDHISM, JAINISM, SIKHISM AND ITS PERSPECTIVE ON NATURE

The values of nonviolence and simplicity are the cornerstones of Buddhism, which is characterised as a religion that is rich in compassion and understanding. This religion has

[2] Vedic Heritage for Environmental Stewardship on JSTOR, https://www.jstor.org/stable/43809624 (last visited Jul 2, 2023).

a deep appreciation for the natural world, and these precepts reflect that. Additionally, rivers, woods, mountains, and other natural features are accorded reverence. Even celestial bodies such as the sun, the moon, and other planets are shown reverence by Buddhists. You may find some references to this in the "*Sutta Nipata*", which is a Buddhist text. In this text, the Buddha discusses or, more accurately, puts down certain regulations that forbid the contamination of rivers, ponds, wells, and so on. In the same way that Buddhism is founded on the principles of ahimsa and the need of maintaining a disciplined life, Jainism does as well. They hold the belief that each individual should demonstrate love, compassion, and care for other living species; in this manner, they may work towards achieving environmental harmony.[3]. Sikhism is another religion in which it is believed that nature is God's creation, and the same thing is announced in Guru Granth Sahib, which is the holy book of Sikhs. Sikhism is comparable to the two religions that have been discussed before. It is believed that all of nature's components should always remain in a state of balance, and that failure to do so will result in unhappiness and catastrophe.

VI. ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDSHIP IN ISLAM AND CHRISTIANITY

The laws for protecting the natural world in Islam come from the enlightening teachings of the Prophet Mohammed as well as the divinely inspired sacred book, the Qur'an. The message that the Qur'an conveys is one of cohesion, harmony, equilibrium, and order. A further theory proposes that God created man with the intention of imbuing him with divine qualities and fashioning him in his own image. Therefore, the environment is a gift from the Almighty to all eras, not only the current age by itself, but all ages, including the past and the future. When such a balance is upset, it might result in retribution, which is something that is referenced again in the holy Quran.

[3] What is Buddhism - Principles & Symbols of Buddhism, About Buddhism Religion, https://www.stateexpressindia.com/buddhist-tourism/what-is-buddhism/ (last visited Jul 2, 2023).

Several passages in the Bible make several allusions to the need of preserving the natural world. We are able to claim that Christianity places a strong emphasis on maintaining an environment that is in pristine form because it requires its adherents to defend and preserve the natural world, as well as to persuade others to do the same.

VII. ECOLOGICAL SPIRITUALITY: EXPLORING THE SACREDNESS OF NATURE

Ecological spirituality[4] is a philosophical and spiritual framework that recognises the connectivity and interdependence of all living species. Ecological spirituality was developed in the 1970s. It acknowledges that nature is not only a resource to be exploited for human purposes but rather a complex web of life that should be revered, respected, and protected in order to preserve it for future generations[5]. The eco-spiritual movement takes inspiration from a wide range of religious and spiritual traditions that have, for a very long time, acknowledged the holiness of the natural world. It places an emphasis on the value that nature has in and of itself, apart from whatever instrumental or utilitarian worth it may have.

The core tenet of ecological spirituality[6] is the conviction that the natural world has a worth of its own and is infused with the presence of a higher power. Every single tree, river, and animal is considered to be a representation of the holy because people believe that nature is a direct manifestation of the sacred. This viewpoint is a critique of the anthropocentric worldview, which puts people at the centre of the universe and gives us authority over the natural world. Instead, ecological spirituality encourages us to acknowledge our role within the complex fabric of life and to approach nature with a sense of reverence, appreciation, and humility.

[4] Matthew I. Billet et al., *Ecospirituality: The psychology of moral concern for nature*, 87 J. ENVIRON. PSYCHOL (2023).
[5] *Id.*
[6] L. Suganthi, *Ecospirituality: A Scale to Measure an Individual's Reverential Respect for the Environment*, 11 ECOPSYCHOLOGY 110 (2019), https://www.liebertpub.com/doi/10.1089/eco.2018.0065 (last visited Jul 2, 2023).

The connectivity and connectedness of all living things is a central theme in ecologically informed spirituality. It acknowledges that the health and well-being of the ecosystems that we are a part of are directly related to the health and well-being of ourselves and our communities. Ecological spirituality fosters a movement in awareness away from a self-centred viewpoint and towards one that recognises the larger ecological community. This shift in consciousness is encouraged by the acknowledgment of our connection within ecological spirituality. This shift encourages us to develop a feeling of kinship with all forms of life and to take actions that contribute to the development of the whole community that inhabits the Earth.

The concept of ecological responsibility plays an important role in ecological spirituality[7]. The acknowledgment of the holiness of the natural world forces us to act as responsible stewards of the Earth. This comprises adopting sustainable lifestyles, preserving resources, lowering pollution levels, and actively working towards the restoration and preservation of ecosystems as well as other areas of the environment. Ecological duty encompasses not just environmental stewardship but also environmental activism and lobbying. As we work to defend the rights of the natural world and lobby for environmental legislation that are more sustainable, we are fulfilling our ecological obligation.

Confucianism, sometimes known as the "civil religion," has had a significant impact on the cultures of China (especially), Japan, Vietnam, and Korea for a significant amount of time. They committed to particular ideas for the preservation of local people and believed that daily life was an integral component of religious practise[8]. In Judaism, the land and the environment are seen as belonging to God, and as such, it is the responsibility of humanity to care for them. According to one interpretation of the biblical account of Genesis[9], God's first choice for a dwelling place for people was the garden in Eden.

[7] *Supra,* note 3.
[8] Implications of the Rise of "Confucian" East Asia on JSTOR, https://www.jstor.org/stable/20027620 (last visited Jul 2, 2023).
[9] Confucianisms for a Changing World Cultural Order, CONFUCIANISMS A CHANG. WORLD CULT. ORDER (2018).

Daoism is an ancient Chinese religion that emphasises maintaining peace with both nature and other people. In general, its principles consist of a set of guidelines that point a person in the direction of a suitable approach to lead others and act.[10].

VIII. CONCLUSION

In each and every worldview, the question of what brought about the creation of the universe is interpreted differently. It is essential for us to have an understanding of the spiritual dimensions that are engaged in the interplay between ecology and society if we are to have any hope of comprehending the link that exists between people and the natural environment in which they live. on recent years, the study of the role that religion has on several environmental issues has evolved into a field that draws heavily from a wide range of academic disciplines. There is the possibility for several diverse precepts to be contributed by each and every religion towards the construction of a moral code for the purpose of defending the natural world and advancing environmentally responsible practices.

It is possible for us to draw the conclusion that religion and the environment are both inter-disciplinary subjects that are rising in both relevance and variety. Researchers in this discipline are now confronted with a large number of important concerns about the meaning of religion in relation to the environment. The study of religion and ecology has been and should continue to be a beneficial partnership between the scientific community and the religious community, especially among those doing research in the fields of ecology and religion.

[10] International Research Journal Commerce arts science, *ROLE OF RELIGION FOR CONSERVATION OF ENVIROMENT*,https://www.academia.edu/35637660/ROLE_OF_RELIGION_FOR_CONSERVATION_OF_ENVIROMENT (last visited Jul 2, 2023).